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ABSTRACT

In order to broaden student understanding of past and contemporary situations, the world history survey course needs to consider religion as a vehicle through which history moves. The course proposal includes prehistory and paleolithic times to contemporary Islamic culture. The course is thematic and comparative in orientation, but moves through historical time in a conceptual rather than chronological manner. The six major units use religion as the main organizing principle. The first semester of the course examines historical developments from precivilization to the classical era. Unit 1 uses a case study to examine precivilization. In the second unit, students explore the relationship of religion to the environment with a focus on the ancient riverine civilizations of Mesopotamia and Egypt. Unit 3 investigates the ancient classical era where religion affected every aspect of life. The second semester explores religious reformations and the impact on civilizations. Unit 4 examines the ancient civilization of India and the Hindu religion. Unit 5 moves geographically along the trade route from the Indian to Chinese civilization. The last unit focuses on the birth, development and diffusion of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. A 30-item bibliography, and references to 18 world history books and 7 articles provide supplementary reading and textbook information. (CK)

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From the Axial Age to the New Age: Religion As A Dynamic of World History

Religion, from the paleolithic to neolithic age and from the axial age to the new age, has been a central precept of human societies. Thus, it should be essential to the teaching of the world history survey course, particularly at the precollegiate level. Often world historians, such as McNeill and Stavrianos, have posed other dynamics of world history such as *trade* and *technology*, but **religion** needs to be an integral part of any such course.[1] If history is the study of change and continuity of human societies and ecological systems over time, religion has helped preserve and sustain coherence of societies, maintain connection between civilizations, provide a sense of human progression, induce change -- renew, regenerate, transform -- in cultures, and render insights into the human, natural and supernatural worlds.

Nineteenth century historians of world civilizations -- Marx and Weber -- had to account for the significant role religion played in these civilizations, even though they relegated it to a secondary or non-significant, almost "opiating" position. Early twentieth century historians such as Christopher Dawson, took into account world religions but often through the lens of Christianity and Western Civilization.[2] In the middle of this century, the legendary world historian, Arnold Toynbee, inched closer to understanding the important dynamic of world religions when he suggested that one of the key aspects of the twentieth century would be the meeting of the West and East -- Christianity and Buddhism.

In our present-day, global age, a new paradigm of how we view the present and of acquiring understanding of the world -- not of nations, regions, or civilizations -- is paramount, and thus the need for world history. As Stavrianos states, "...humankind from its very beginnings has a basic unity that must be recognized and respected."[3] Within this basic unity, religion has been central. In this new paradigm of world history there is a need to incorporate religion as one of its essential dynamics.

Knowledge about world religions and their history are essential for understanding and living our diverse world. The thinking and behavior of both individuals and civilizations are often shaped by religious beliefs and values; creating what might be termed a worldview. History, our own nation's pluralism, and contemporary events provide ample evidence that religion is a significant cultural value and powerful motivating force. Needless to say, religion has also inspired many of the world's beautiful art, architecture, literature, and music.[4] While trade and telecommunications have led to an interconnected world at this juncture in history, one should not forget religion.

If one assumes that history attempts to make the present intelligent, and without being a Whig historian, one only need look at recent events to see the imperative for religion as central to the teaching of world history. A recent picture and caption in the *New York Times*, highlighting a rarely practiced ritual from Jainism "a pacifist religion that arose the sixth century B.C.E. as an offshoot of Hinduism," begged for a world history context with religion explanation.[5] Or, the meeting this fall of the Parliament of the World's Religions, commemorating a similar meeting at the Chicago World's Fair a century ago, which launched the serious systematic study of world religions.[6] Or, the article that raised questions about the U.S.' attempt to accommodate all religious traditions at this holiday season. [7]

There has been, unfortunately, a burgeoning constitution warfare over religion in the schools, almost reminiscent of the 1924 Scopes trial. While it is understandable that the goal is to teach *about* religion rather than teach religion, too often this controversy has meant both teachers and textbooks have come under close scrutiny, and it has led many teachers to forgo any discussion about religion, even in history.[8] Fortunately, groups such as the National Council for the Social

Studies has taken a strong stand for including the study about religions in the social studies curriculum. It is also good to see the World History Association help teachers deal with this subject. Three and one-half years ago the Rocky Mountain World History Association sponsored a conference on "Religion in World History." More is still needed.

For students to have any understanding of contemporary religious conflicts, which range from Bosnia and Northern Ireland in the West to India and East Timor in the East, an historical perspective, which includes the religious dimension is paramount. And with the Cold War over, one has a choice of seeing the invocation of new paradigms in which religion figures prominently. Harvard's Samuel P. Huntington predicts that the next "clash of civilizations" will be the world conflict of the West and the Islamic world. This is parallel to Hawaii's Mark Juergensmeyer's "new cold war," which will be a confrontation between the zealots -- religious fundamentalists -- and Western secular societies. [9]

What role and how significant might religion be as an organizing principle for the study of world history? Some fundamental historical concepts for students' understanding are religiously based, particularly the image of time. This imagining process often creates a certain lens -- worldview -- through which to view other cultures. The historical sense of dating of calendars for most American students -- using A.D. or B.C -- is almost unconsciously based on the Christian Bible. There are and have been other dating systems, whether it be the Jewish celebration of Rosh Hashanah and its different demarcation of historical time or the recent change of calendars in Japan as a result of a new emperor. This has led to a growing self-consciousness among world historians particularly to recognize and be sensitive to these non-Christian dating schemes. A relatively recent dating scheme has been invoked for those non-Christian civilizations, using more neutral terms, such as C.E. or B.C.E (the common era or before the common era).

The various world religions have also influenced how each culture views and describes historical time. In turn, these different images of historical time help create different worldviews, many of which are explained in geometric metaphors. In the West, the Judaeo-Christian (and even Muslim) traditions have created a linear, teleological view of history. Based on the Bible's Book of Revelations, there have been utopian views and millenarian expectations of history. They have both a transcendent and infratemporal dimensions. In the East, the Hindu India's conception of historical time has been a geometric spiral. The yugas, one of four recurring cycles in Hinduism, and the karma-run wheel of life can be seen applying to both individuals and civilizations. This reflects basic Hindu beliefs in reincarnation. Further East, China's image of history has been a wave (almost like a sine curve), corresponding to the almost cyclical rise and fall of the emperor's mandate from heaven. Thus, history become a moral treatise of the rise and fall of benevolent to despotic governments.

Besides worldviews about historical time, there are some other essential understandings for American high school students, whether it be artistic renderings of religious figures, or political concepts such as theocracy, religious law, and divine right / mandate from heaven, or economic concepts such as usury. The educational reformer Ted Sizer has proposed that schools in general and teachers in particular raise the essential questions of their discipline. For religion in world history one might have to begin with the basics: "What is religion? How did it originate? What does religion have to do with family, aging, death?" [10] A study of religion in world history would definitely advance such major historical questions as whether religion played a role in the rise of science, capitalism, and individualism in the West, or is Confucianism a religion or not.

There are a few models on how to incorporate religion into world history. For one historian, the same central question is asked for almost all civilizations, "What can I do to be saved?" World history in this case is how each of these civilizations have answered this fundamental question. [11] This represents what might be termed the constant theme approach. While perhaps the phrasing of this particular question indicates a western conceptual framework, it raises the question about similarities and differences among religions. Some students of religion believe there is a transcendent unity to all religions, some see the cultural and specific distinctions, while still a third

see some a combination, almost a mosaic of elements of unity and distinction. Even with this debate about the uniqueness or universal nature of religion, this approach does lend itself to a very useful comparative method.

Another, innovative thematic approach, has been done by Kevin Reilly in his textbook, The West and the World.[12] Here, such thought-provoking themes are presented as "Age and Family: Religion and Cultural Change", "Violence and Vengeance: Religion and the State", and " Ecology and Theology: Religion and Science." Reilly's companion book of readings also helps elucidate these themes. Even our own Steve Gosch here has collaborated on a book of documents, which also has a very appropriately arranged "topical contents," with a section devoted to religion.[13]

My own approach is perhaps more eclectic, borrowing from all the world historians, while still working within a somewhat traditional paradigm. The world history course that I teach is a self-designed, two-semesters course with a common syllabus and a series of introductory lectures; it has seven sections and four teachers. The course loosely follows the California framework for history and social studies, particularly with regard to religion. Also, the course satisfies the newly instituted, entrance requirement to the University of California system, which is a year's study of world history, culture, and geography.

In this course, there are six major units, beginning with prehistory and paleolithic times, and continuing through to contemporary Islamic culture. Focusing exclusively on the Eurasian-African landmass, the course selects the major "golden ages" of civilizations and examines the process of their initial development and later of their cultural diffusion. The course is both thematic and comparative in orientation but moves through historical time in a conceptual -- post-holing -- rather than actual chronological manner. Though comprehensive, the goal of the course is not maximum coverage. We choose key facets of an historical period that often raises questions, challenges, or problems, as well as for illustrating archetypal patterns of development. Comparisons are made of major civilizations as a whole, often using religion as the key factor. While there are compromises and selection choices made, the course seems to have its own integrity, combining a world history and world cultures -- religion -- course. At various times the course is complimented by interdisciplinary connections with the biology, English, art, and community service programs.

The course is nevertheless very committed to using religion as the main organizing principle. This commitment is ensured by the fact that the only textbook that we use throughout the entire year is devoted to religion, Living Religions.[14] Generally using a single history textbook is problematic, especially for high school freshmen, but we have found, however, that this book is an exception and it is accepted. Students are fascinated by different religions, various worldviews, and elaborate rituals. Nevertheless, because of students general antipathy for textbooks, my colleagues and I decided on using one major period piece--book--per unit, supplemented with a reader of primary and secondary sources, put together by ourselves. This reader helps provide the world history context as well as reinforces this commitment to understanding religion's role in world history. This commitment is also ensured by the questions asked, specifically on semester examinations, and the journals which the students keep. These journals are almost exclusively devoted to having students find news articles about the religion we are studying and reflect and comment on it based on the reading.

As the title of the text, Living Religions, indicates, there is a bit more of a contemporary orientation rather than a history of world religions. It nevertheless serves to ground students into the basic tenets of the major faiths of the world. Its weakness is its strength, in that it captures the essence of the religion, a bit frozen in time now, highlighting only some of the basic developments of each, but no extensive analysis of its historical role. The general structure of the book, beginning with indigenous sacred ways and moving to Hinduism, might also be another model for a world historical inquiry. It does not, however, completely guide our course.

Our approach with religion is less theological and more cultural, anthropological, or sociological. Our working assumption is that religion is seen as a belief system that informs and shapes a culture, which in turn establishes a certain worldview. But religion is also more than just a

worldview. It has a very important spiritual quality, which is important to acknowledge. One world historian even describes religion as "expressing the inexpressible... an encounter with the numinous--divine power...a sense of the presence of something 'wholly other,' something totally different in kind from all the material realities of everyday living."[15] However, in order to express this sometimes indescribable experience, one has had to turn to metaphors. This has led, however, to religious discourse moving from "the level of the universal down to the historically conditioned realities of a particular time and place."[16]

The first semester of the course examines three historical developments: precivilization (paleolithic to neolithic age), early civilization (neolithic to 1000 B.C.E.), and the ancient, classical era of Hellenic and Hellenistic worlds (1000 B.C.E. to 100 C.E.). The spring term explores three classical, ancient to modern, Asian civilizations -- Hindu India in South Asia, Buddhist and Confucian China in East Asia, and Judaeo-Christian-Islamic in West Eurasia / Mediterranean world. This format introduces students to the people, religious cultures, and historical events at the dawn of and throughout the major Western and non-Western civilizations. Religion is the central organizing principle for this exploration of cultural transformation, renewal, interaction, and diffusion. The religious dimension serves to inform the students about various nuministic experiences, worldviews, cultural values, civilizational tensions and progression, and cultural diffusion. The course also provides the sense of historical continuity; it specifically exposes them to the religious people, ideas, and teachings that became enduring influences in world religious-thought systems across the centuries to the present day.

We begin the course with an examination of precivilization, using a case study approach specifically looking at one culture, the BaMbuti tribe -- the Pygmies -- of the African rainforest. Their culture is both historical and contemporary, from which we extract generalizations about precivilized peoples and cultures. While this approach is not without its problems, it nevertheless is useful, practical, and almost necessary for ninth graders. Two assumptions are made with this approach. One, is that indigenous peoples had and, in fact, still do have a religious component, and two, that there are some similarities between these ancient tribal peoples and other indigenous peoples, particularly with regard to religious ways. There are important questions and debates about these assumptions. On the one hand, one can find a Carl Jung, who has asserted that "all primitive societies have always had religion."[17] Then there are world historians, such as Hugh Thomas, who raise doubts, "naturally, there is no certainty that there was religion: yet it is easy to imagine hunting men enjoying a primitive worship of sun and moon..."[18] However, we prefer to follow Anthony Esler's argument, "there is at least some evidence that some sort of supernatural belief -- the seeds of religion -- existed as far back as 100,000 B.C.E."[19] We conclude this section with an investigation of the influence of the neolithic revolution on the religious dimensions of early civilized humans.

In the next unit, we focus on the ancient riverine civilizations of Mesopotamia and Egypt. Here, the students explore the relationship of religion to the environment, specifically the Tigris-Euphrates and Nile rivers. There are also comparisons made between the Egyptian and Mesopotamian senses of religion. Students become acquainted with such concepts as theocracy and priestly classes; furthermore, they see the architectural renderings or manifestations of possible religious beliefs within the civilizations with the ziggurats and pyramids. An important context for understanding the nature of this religious experience is provided by one world historian, "if the religious vision that resulted seems strange to us, it is perhaps safer to attribute the differences to the civilization that shaped that vision, rather than to any crucial difference in the religious experience itself."[20] Beyond general historical background reading, the *Epic of Gilgamesh* is assigned both to give a Mesopotamian worldview and to compare the Mesopotamian flood story and the later Biblical one. This is in part to anticipate the rise from this geographic area of one of world's first universal faiths, Judaism, "a religion independent (however) of any geographic or cultural focus."[21] In further anticipation of Judaism as well as in preparation to compare various views on life after death students read excerpts from the Egyptian *Book of the Dead.* Finally, anyone familiar with the

104th Psalm in the Hebrew Scriptures will have no trouble recognizing its antecedent in the Song to Aton, during Ikhnaton's reign.

The last unit of the first semester is an investigation of the ancient classical era of Hellenic and Hellenistic worlds (1000 B.C.E. to 100 C.E.). As most historians would agree, religion in classical Greece was an integral part of polis life and accordingly affected every aspect of that life. And it was evident everywhere, from the creation of the human-like gods, to the artistic renderings in the name of religion, to the religiously-inspired literature, and to the cultural rituals and ceremonies. As both a link to and a contrast with the Mesopotamians, however, the Greeks didn't feel that their origin and sole human existence was being slavishly dutiful to their religious nature.

In exploring this classical period, we partly use Karl Jaspers' helpful model of the ***Axial Age***, a time from ca 600 B.C.E to 600 C.E. in which many of the world's great religions and/or philosophical thinking had their historical founding.[22] An emergent moment on such a grand scale, this was an historical breakthrough from earlier traditional religions. Perhaps no other era in world history has contributed so much to spiritual and rational thought than this time period with these great traditions -- from the Hellenic Platonists to Hebrew prophets, from the Persia's Zoroaster and India's Buddha and Mahavira (Jainism) to China's Confucius and Lao Tzu, all arose during this period. ***Why*** and ***how*** this occurred are fascinating questions for world historians to investigate. This unifying period of world history and world religions is so foundational for later unity, development, and diffusion. In fact, this unique period, in and of itself, provides a wonderful, tripartite model for examining world history: 1) a foundational moment for a civilization inspired by religion; 2) the unfolding of this religion and its development and often fusing with the civilization; 3) the diffusion of the religion and civilization. This period also almost invites students to take the artistic license with history, by having them role play imaginary dialogues among or between such religious luminaries and historical contemporaries as Socrates, Jesus, Zoroaster, Buddha, and Confucius.

There are many implications of the Axial Age perhaps for a better understanding of today's contemporary, "New Age" world. As one popular world history text states,

> ...the late twentieth century is reminiscent of the initial encounter of the West and East in the Hellenistic Age. Then, the rationalistic, humanistic Greeks encountered the eastern mystery religions and were profoundly influenced by them. Now, various strains of mystical thought again appeared from the East and from "primitive" peoples. It could be said that the non-Western world was providing intellectual repayment for the powerful secular ideologies it had borrowed in the nineteenth century.[23]

Religion does go hand-in-hand with Hellenic rationality. Fordham University professor, Ewert Cousins goes a step further, however. He calls the contemporary age "the second axial age."[24] Whereas the first axial age was an emergent moment of these classical religious traditions, the second one -- the contemporary age -- is another breakthrough moment because of the meeting of world religions on such a vast scale. As a result of this meeting, traditional religions themselves are changing through their response to each other and to the challenge of the global environmental crisis.[25]

Even when one explores the major Hellenic inter-civilizational conflict with the Persians, one has the great opportunity to introduce the religious culture behind the Persian empire -- Zoroastrianism. An important world history question for students is why this religion didn't circle the world. One would think that a religion which placed so high a value on the individual, so logically separated good from evil, and saw a symbiotic relationship with God would not remain almost exclusively a Persian possession and privilege.

As part of this Axial Age, the classical Hellenic era and the expansive Hellenistic age also serve as models for examining other civilizations' developments, both toward a classical stage and then in the process of cultural diffusion. This model of analysis anticipates many of the other world

religions, their development and diffusion throughout the Eurasian landmass. These included Buddhism, Confucianism, Christianity, and much later Islam. Furthermore, the wanderings of Alexander the Great helped bring a significant Hellenic sense of artistic renderings of Buddha, thus visually displaying the Hellenistic age in action.

It is actually with Alexander the Great, as a personification of cultural diffusion across the Eurasian landmass, that we end one semester and begin another. This concept of the "Axial Age" also links the two semesters of the course. Here again, we explore one the great schisms of history occurring in the 6th century B.C.E., when religious reformations challenged age-old religious and social systems advocating acceptance in the East. Both Buddhism in India and Confucianism in China emerged and had profound impacts on their respective civilizations, and later others. In order for students to appreciate the significant effect these religious systems, it is necessary to establish the historical cultural setting for both.

Thus, in the first unit of the spring semester we examine the ancient, classical civilization of India, with a major focus on Hinduism. It is important to begin with the historical background of the development of Hinduism as one of the first religions with an established set of "scriptures." A natural comparison might be between these "peoples of the book" and others, such as the Hebrews.

At the same time, however, Indian civilization is also rich in oral traditions. One major goal of this unit is to explore the religious ideas, cultural values, and worldviews as expressed in the great epic, The Ramanyana. Through close textual reading, dramatic performances, and art work, the student may begin to understand how central this epic in particular and the epic tradition in general has been in the development of India's civilization. We also explore some of the reasons that might have led to the religious reformation and cultural transformation of Hindu India by Buddhism. Buddhism then becomes our focus, both for understanding of the religious and civilizational dimensions and for its trans-civilization linkage -- its almost Hellenistic quality.

The biography of Buddha's life is central to understanding the basis of this religious tradition. Two of the key questions are why Buddhism left India and how and why it became rooted in alien cultures? Or phrased differently, what characteristics about either the religion or the new cultures that allowed it to be so transportable and to develop elsewhere? Conversely, why did it leave India and not become a central part of its religiously heterogenous civilization. Generally, some of the most lively class discussions occur about the religious dimensions and worldview of Buddhism. It is here that we try to make some appropriate intellectual connections to the student's community service work. The biography of Buddha resonates in what they view and experience as some of the social ills of the contemporary world. This experiential component of community service has its own philosophical integrity. However, linking it with another worldview might help provide a context for students own questions about their community service experiences, as well as the buddhist tradition itself.

Similar to the Hellenic civilization's rise to a classical stage, we analyze the rise of the Indian civilization to one of its classical stages, the Gupta era (300-500 C.E.). And just as the Hellenistic tradition help create artistic renderings of Buddhism, the religion itself also inspired wonderful art. In fact, some of the best surviving Gupta era sculpture and paintings are Buddhist inspired in the Ajanta and Ellora caves. Within India some other areas of religion that might be worth considering for inclusion within a world history survey might be the role of Ashoka and his alleged proclamation of religious tolerance, the intriguing bhakti movement, and the influence of Jainism. My survey course is not able to include these areas, however. At this stage of the survey and at this time of the year, the course needs to move on to China.

It is through the dynamics of trade, transportation, and technology that we move geographically along the silk road from the Indian to Chinese civilizations. These trade routes, which were both overland and by sea, connected not just India and China but actually the whole Eurasian landmass. Material exchange and cultural borrowing became lively activities along these trade routes. It is during the axial age that these routes also fostered the diffusion of religious ideas, particularly Buddhism from India to China. During this section of the course, when watching

Buddhism's migration, students generate wonderful projects, particularly about the "silk roads", and truly come to understand many aspects of cultural diffusion, Eurasian geography, and trade.

When presenting China some world history surveys offer a comparative study of the Han and Roman civilizations. This is a wonderful model, given that they were historical contemporaries and, in fact, had cross-cultural interaction. Perhaps an equally interesting model might be to focus within the Chinese civilization itself, particularly looking at the T'ang dynasty China (618-907 C.E.).

This "golden age", cosmopolitan dynasty shifted the world's center of gravity to East Asia, and for the next millennium China was truly the middle kingdom. During this almost "inter-civilizational" dynasty, there entered into China three new religious traditions -- Buddhism, Nestorian Christianity, and Islam --, which intermixed with both indigenous religions and other civilizational components. In fact, this "hellenic and hellenistic-like" dynasty also serves as an interesting laboratory for examining these axial age religious traditions blending within China, and later, for some these religions and civilizational aspects diffusing throughout Eurasian world. This diffusion process renewed the Han-Roman world axis, as well as established a new East Asian cultural axis, particularly with Japan and Korea.

It was during this legendary dynasty, that trade, technology, and religion converged to produced the world's first printed material -- the Buddhist sutras. Here, the orality of Indian traditions gives way to a Chinese civilization steeped in writing and the written textual tradition. This new printing technology, while enhancing the already strong commitment to the written word, made these new religious traditions more accessible in a written form.[26] The great Chinese classic, Journey to the West, a fantastic, "Wizard of Oz"- pilgrimage-like story, highlights this process of returning to India to retrieve the great Buddhists texts and bring them to China. Now with this new technology there was a renewed emphasis placed on texts, and similar to other religious traditions, a strong hermeneutical tradition arose around the texts of both Confucianism and Buddhism.

Students studying China ought to focus on this textual tradition, and the world history survey should acknowledge this significant civilizational aspect. In the course, after preliminary background readings on geography, traditional family life, and the T'ang dynasty, students read selections from Confucius' Analects, T'ang Dynasty Stories, and Buddhists selections. Each of these readings render insights into the human, natural, and supernatural worlds, comprising part of the Chinese worldview. During the T'ang dynasty that Confucianism, having developed and flourished for a millennium, now underwent a regenerative process. This renewal and transformational process into a neo-Confucian tradition helps undermine the ever-present assumption that Confucianism is exclusively a static, monolithic system. Neo-confucianism is very important to connect with the Chinese goal of moral governance, the implementation of a civil service exam system, and essential Chinese cultural values. One of the significant questions to ask is, does Confucianism have a religious dimension? For a world history survey it would be very useful to compare Buddhism and Confucianism?

The last unit of the course returns along the silk routes to West Eurasia. Here, we focus on the birth, development, and diffusion of the three modern, monotheistic religions -- Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. We begin by using very specific readings concerning the origins of each of these traditions, especially readings from sacred texts. Then we attempt to provide a context for these religions by using selective history to illustrate the development and later diffusion throughout the Eurasian world. We focus more particularly on this diffusion process use Ross Dunn's model for analysis. Here, the major factors that have helped diffuse these major religions have been immigration, force, and missionary work.[27] This helpful model of analysis may be used with the diffusion of other religions, such as Buddhism.

A major assumption governs this last unit, however. Many of our students lack significant understanding about religion in general, and few have had any formal religious training. This course assumes that out of the three religions -- Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, they know the least about Islam. Thus, while providing an introductory overview to Judaism and Christianity, we focus more

heavily on Islam.[28] Besides reading Living Religions and selections from the Koran, we read Elizabeth Fernea's Guests of the Sheik. While dealing with contemporary (1960's) village life in Iraq, it raises the interesting issues, particularly about historical continuity and change for Islam, and religious influences on gender issues.

Our course ends here, but a few thoughts about other ways to approach this last unit. One model might be to compare the religious diffusion of Christianity through the Roman empire with Islam's rapid spread across the Eurasian world in the 8th century. Also, a parallel model to the historical analysis of the T'ang dynasty, might be to focus on medieval Spain, the interactions of the three religious traditions of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. This model might provide a slightly different perspective on 1492 and the "Reconquista." The diffusion of Christianity to the new worlds and the impact of the Sephardic Jews might be an interesting comparison. One final and wonderful comparison between Christianity and Muslim might be their different reactions to the 14th century Black Death.[29]

In conclusion, for our own understanding of the contemporary age, which Cousins calls "the second axial age," it is necessary to look back into history. Even in the struggle for new paradigms for both the post-Cold War religion figures prominently. The world history survey course needs to consider religion as more than an integral part, but almost as a vehicle through which history moves. Religion has been both a stabilizing and destabilizing force throughout history; cultures and people have been transformed by and, in turn transformed religion. Certain religions have remained largely in one geographic area, while others have migrated to other parts of the world, bringing with it new characteristics, values, and worldviews. Much has been inspired by and done in the name of religion. Religion has both induced and retarded change in cultures. If one uses Karl Jaspers very provocative "axial age" model then one can see some breakthrough -- emergent -- moments in history. Whereas the first axial age was an emergent moment of these classical religious traditions, the second one -- the contemporary Age -- is another breakthrough moment because of the meeting of world religions on such a vast scale. As a result of this meeting, traditional religions themselves are changing through their response to each other and to the challenge of the global environmental crisis.[30] From the Axial Age to the New Age, religion has been a central focus, and the world history survey might reflect this dynamic.

1. William H. McNeill, The Rise of the West (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964), 85. L. S. Stavrianos, The World To 1500: A Global History, 4th ed. (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall), XI.

2. James Oliver and Christina Scott, eds., Religion and World History: A Selection from the Works of Christopher Dawson (New York, Image Books, 1975). See also Christopher Dawson, Dynamics of World History, ed. John J. Mulloy (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1956). Furthermore, see C. T. McIntire, ed. God, History, and Historians: Modern Christian Views of History (New York, Oxford University Press, 1977).

3. Stavrianos, The World To 1500: A Global History, X.

4. "Including the Study About Religions in the Social Studies Curriculum: A Position Statement and Guidelines," Social Education, May, 1985, 413-414.

5. "Thousands Honor Prince of Peace with Six-hour Ritual," The New York Times, Monday, December 20, 1993, A12.

6. "More Diversity Than Harmony at Religious Assembly," The New York Times, Tuesday, September 7, 1993, A15.

7. "Holiday Dilemma at Schools: Is That a Legal Decoration?," The New York Times, Thursday, December 17, 1993, A1 & B7.

8. "Including the Study About Religions in the Social Studies Curriculum: A Position Statement and Guidelines," Social Education, May, 1985, 413-414. There have also been some good follow-up materials, see "Teaching about the Religions of the World: A Course Outline," Social Education, September, 1990, 300-301. Even the Foreign Policy Institute's Great Decisions program focused on "Religion in World Politics: Why the Resurgence?", Great Decisions, New York: Foreign Policy Association, 1986.

9. "The Coming Clash of Civilizations Or, The West Against the Rest," The New York Times, Sunday, June 6, 1993, section 4, p. 19. See also Mark Juergensmeyer, The New Cold War?: Religious Nationalism Confronts the Secular State (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).

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